

## **FISH and WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET**

**Meeting Date:** April 14, 2016

**Agenda Item:** Grant Marsh Wildlife Management Area Addition

**Division:** Wildlife

**Action Needed:** Endorsement

**Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation:** 5 Min

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### **Background**

FWP proposes to add 392 acres of adjacent property to the existing Grant Marsh Wildlife Management Area (WMA) located approximately 7 miles north of Hardin (see maps). The primary benefit of this acquisition is to conserve riparian habitat and enhance public recreational opportunities.

The majority of the Bighorn River Valley has been converted to irrigated cropland. This addition would conserve one of the largest blocks of intact riparian habitat remaining in the Bighorn River Valley while broadening the conservation footprint of the existing Grant Marsh WMA. A productive complement of wildlife habitat values such as mature cottonwood galleries and native shrub thickets exist on this property. The parcel supports mule deer, white-tailed deer, wild turkeys, pheasants, waterfowl and many non-game wildlife species that require intact riparian habitats. With nearly two miles of river frontage, this addition would expand public hunting and other public outdoor recreation opportunities.

### **Public Involvement Process & Results**

FWP has not sought public comment at this time. Upon endorsement from the Commission, an Environmental Assessment and subsequent public involvement would be conducted.

### **Alternatives and Analysis**

The proposed action is to purchase this addition. Under a no-action alternative, this river bottom land would be in jeopardy of habitat degradation or conversion of riparian habitats to tillage agriculture and public accessibility would be restricted or entirely unavailable.

### **Agency Recommendation & Rationale**

FWP recommends endorsement by the Commission, which would allow the Department to complete further analysis and public review. This addition to the WMA would expand conserved river bottom adjacent to an existing WMA. These habitats are highly productive, supporting a variety of game and nongame species and substantial recreational opportunity.

### **Proposed Motion**

I move the Commission endorse this addition to the Grant Marsh WMA, allowing the Department to conduct further analysis and associated public review.